March Madness is here!

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March Madness is upon us, and it is as exciting as ever. We have teams that dominated their conference, and others that made it in by a thread. Nevertheless, they all come to the tournament (whether it is the NCCA tourney or NIT) with one goal: TO WIN IT ALL.

While thinking about this time of year, I realized that men and women who don't normally watch games will now glue themselves to the television. Perhaps they have a favorite team from a school they went to. Maybe the team is from the town where they grew up, or possibly the team represents a particular belief or organization. Whatever the case may be, they will watch with anticipation as their team moves toward the final game. They will cheer, yell, scream, and talk about it with anyone that will listen.

Ironically, there is another, a more final game being played around the world right now. It's not on a basketball court but in the spiritual realm. It's between God's team and the devil's team. God's team has one goal in mind: converting as many people to Christ as possible, and rooting them in their walk of faith.

"If you are afraid of failure you don't deserve to be successful!"
--Charles Barkley

"Me shooting 40% at the foul line is just God's way to say nobody's perfect."
--Shaquille O'Neal

"A winner is someone who recognizes his God-given talents, works his tail off to develop them into skills, and uses these skills to accomplish his goals."
--Larry Bird

"Sometimes a player's greatest challenge is coming to grips with his role on the team."
-- Scottie Pippen

Every Team is made up of several individuals, let's look at these individuals and compare them to the Team that God has put together:

Psalm 28:7

"The LORD is my strength and my shield; my heart trusts in him, and

I am helped. My heart leaps for joy and I will give thanks to him in song."

Just one of the bible verses that talk about strength.

"GOD'S TEAM"

- The **COLLEGE LEADERSHIP** (school Athletic Director) is **GOD THE FATHER.**
    - Are you willing to follow the leadership of the School (God)? Are you willing to hear His wisdom and direction for your life?
    - Do you believe that God has the final authority on who plays the game or not?
- The undefeated **COACH OF THE WINNING TEAM** is **JESUS**. He goes by various names: Christ, Son of God, King of Kings, Lord of Lords, Redeemer, and many more.
    - What is your relationship with the Coach (Jesus) based on?
    - How important is it for you to have a good relationship with the Coach (Jesus)?
    - Describe your relationship with Jesus.
    - Knowing that your coach has the winning game plan**,** is it ok to give up and stop trying to win, or should you still play in this game of life?

- The **GUARD** is the **HOLY SPIRIT.** He is given the task of calling the plays and sending the other players to their assignments.

    - The Holy Spirit led Paul around Asia Minor as he traveled and spread the Gospel. Where do you feel like the Holy Spirit is leading you?

- The teams' **CENTER** is the **PASTOR**. His task is to lead the team to win the game. He encourages the players and directs where the plays go.

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    - Would you trust your center (Pastor) with the ball (Gospel)?

    - Does your center (Pastor) stand out above the others on the court?

    - Are you willing to listen to him as he calls the plays?

- The **FORWARD** is the **CHRISTIAN SAINT**. The Christian Saint is willing to carry the Gospel around the world, passing the ball (Gospel) to other players so they have an opportunity to receive the word.

    - Are you willing to pass the ball (gospel) around so that others can have a chance to receive it?

- The **BASKETBALL** is a great example of the **GOSPEL**; it is passed from individual to individual.

    - Do you practice sharing the ball (Gospel) with others, or are you a ball hog?

- The **CROWD** cheering are those listening to the **WORD** and watching what God is doing.

    - Do people want to hear what God is doing in your life?

- **PLAYERS OF THE WINNING TEAM** are recruited to utilize the gifts that God has given them. They don't play on the team because of their talent, but because of what the coach has already done for them on the court of life.

- **ALL PLAYERS ARE BOUGHT BY THE BLOOD OF THE LAMB!**

    - Why is it important for you to be a part of this team (being a Christian)?

- If you read the **PLAYBOOK** (the Bible), you'll see that the games' outcome is **VICTORY!**

    - How often do you read the playbook (the Bible) each week?

    - Does it make sense to you?

    - Have you asked questions to the coach (Pastor) or teammates (other mature Christians) if it doesn't make sense?

There is good news! The owner (God) and coach (Pastor) are looking for new team players! Will you be one of them?